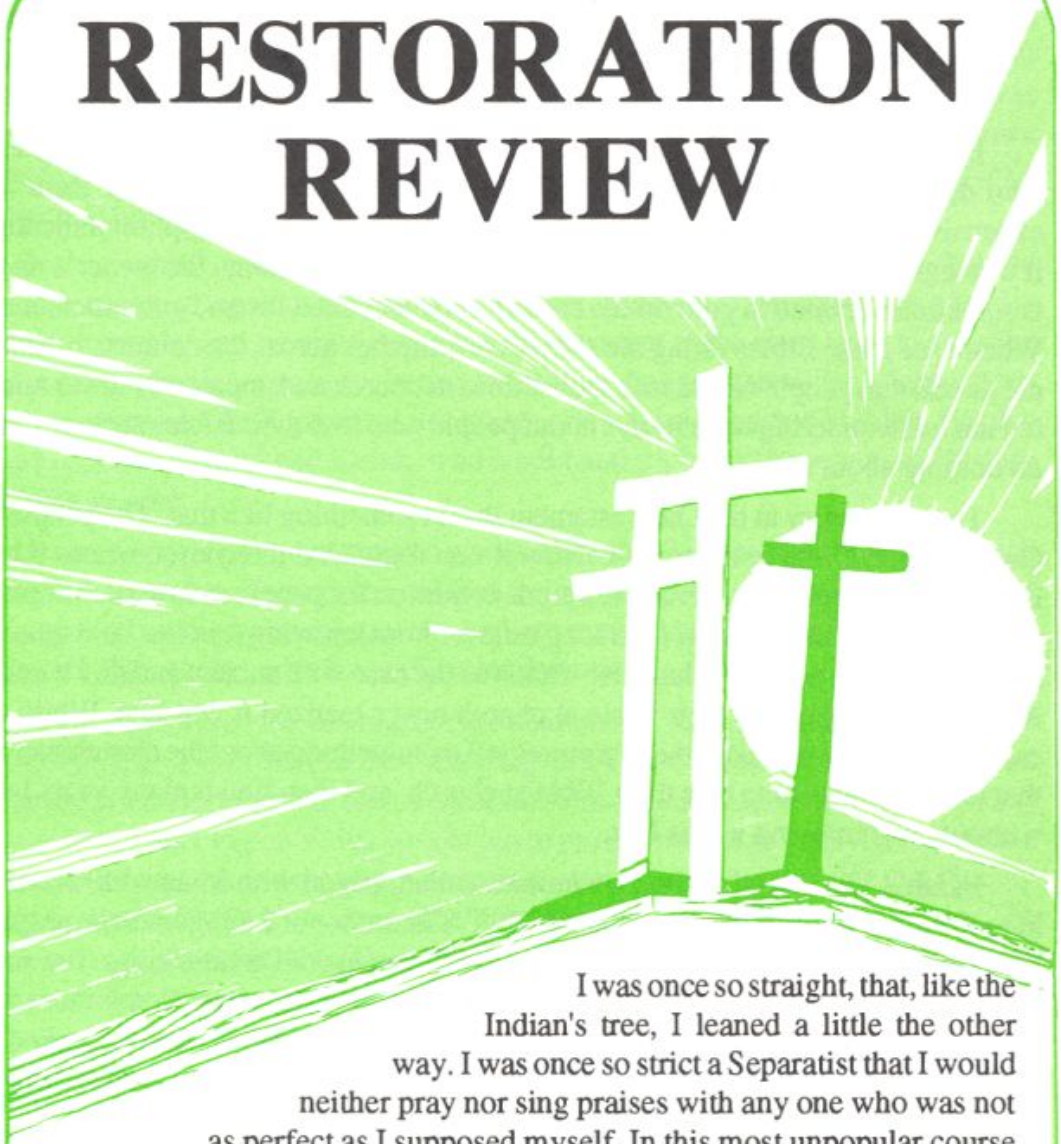
RESTORATION REVIEW



I was once so straight, that, like the Indian's tree, I leaned a little the other way. I was once so strict a Separatist that I would neither pray nor sing praises with any one who was not as perfect as I supposed myself. In this most unpopular course I persisted until I discovered the mistake, and saw that on this principle there never could be a church upon the earth.--*Alexander Campbell*

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Volume 34, No. 5 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **May, 1992**

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What the Old Testament Means to Us. . . No. 15

LOSING THE BIBLE AT CHURCH

Every church has its shelf of "lost" Bibles, left behind by members or visitors who do not realize that they have lost their Bible at church. Some of them are expensive editions and autographed by some loved one, the inscription indicating it was a graduation, anniversary, or Christmas gift. Even though the owner's name is sometimes printed in gold on the cover it is never called for and goes unclaimed. When I see these Bibles lining the shelves of churches across the country, it strikes me as odd that people would lose their Bibles at church and apparently never know it. I am left wondering what it says about people who lose their Bibles at church and do nothing about it.

There is a story in the Old Testament that is something like that. The people of God lost their Bible in the temple. How it was found and the consequences it had is quite a story. It takes a certain religious condition for people to lose such contact with their Bible that they go for a long time without knowing it is lost, and when it is found they are not sure what it is! That was the case with ancient Judah. I wonder if some today who find their Bible at church never realized it was lost. While we cannot judge in such cases, the Scriptures tell us something about the circumstances that led the Israelites to lose their Bible at church, and then find it many years later without ever knowing it was lost.

Judah's "dark age," as it is sometimes called, began with Manasseh who was king for some 37 years, beginning in 687 B.C. The author of 2 Kings and the prophet Jeremiah depict him as the arch-villain of the entire line of Davidic kings. It was he that reversed the reforms of king Hezekiah and led the people into doing more evil than the pagan nations around them. His reign is painted as the darkest period in Judean history. The OT writers hold him responsible for the final destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. by provoking God's wrath as he did.

While his father Hezekiah had created a wave of religious enthusiasm by destroying pagan shrines, Manasseh disillusioned the people by rebuilding them. He arrogantly promoted efforts to unite the worship of Yahweh God with that of Baal, the nature god of Canaan. Yahweh was actually worshiped at the altars of Baal. Sacred prostitution was practiced with royal sanction. Even worse, Manasseh imported pagan cults from Mesopotamia such as the astral cult called "the worship of all the host of heaven." These pagan influences even invaded the temple in Jerusalem. He even revived necromancy, the cult of the dead, which was severely condemned by the prophets.

As if the introduction of astrology, magic, and divination were not enough, Manasseh resorted to the most despicable pagan rite, the practice of human sacrifice. He even burned his own son as an offering, apparently as an attempt to court divine favor. He was also a murderer in that he "shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another." Some scholars think that Manasseh tried to liquidate the prophets, Isaiah being one of them, who was according to tradition "sawn in two" (cf. Heb. 11:37). In his efforts to make peace with Assyria, the dominant nation at the time, king Manasseh surrendered Israel's distinctive religious heritage.

It was indeed a dark period in Judah's history. It is understandable that the nation would lose touch with its holy Scriptures. But God always watched after his covenant people, and he always had the right person at the right time to save the nation from complete apostasy. In this instance he had prophets, some anonymous and some named, like Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and a woman named Huldah. He also raised up a boy king named Josiah, who would make a big difference in the history of God's people.

It was during a period of prophetic silence lasting 75 years that Judah lost touch with its Scriptures. During the wicked reign of Manasseh the prophets went underground, some speaking quietly and anonymously. But finally there was an outburst of prophecy, which usually attended reforms.

Zephaniah's piercing message of the nearness of "the Day of Yahweh" rocked Jerusalem like a bolt of thunder, assuring them that a day of wrath, ruin, and destruction would follow the nation's unfaithfulness. The prophet saw God working in history not only to punish his people but to preserve them as well. To Zephaniah the sins of Manasseh and the nation were so serious that he had no hope that disaster could be averted. Jerusalem was a rebellious city and Judah a shameless nation. The clock was nearing midnight. But in Zeph. 2:3 the prophet finds a remnant that could make a difference by seeking righteousness and humility.

Then there was the great prophet Jeremiah, a contemporary of Zephaniah who began to prophecy in 626 B.C. during the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah. Unlike other prophets Jeremiah was also a priest, and he was called to be a prophet when he was but a youth. It was a time of international unrest, with Assyria, the ruler of the world, tottering on its throne. Jeremiah was called to make history, for God had "set him over the nations and over the kingdoms." Early on the young prophet had visions indicating that Judah would be overrun by a foreign power because of her unfaithfulness.

Jeremiah used rich imagery to describe his people's disloyalty. They had rejected fresh water from Yahweh and had stored up water in "broken cisterns that can hold no water." She was like a faithless wife that leaves her husband and becomes a common

prostitute. Even if she washed herself with lye and used much soap she would still be unclean. Like her adulterous sister Israel, Judah too would have to be given a certificate of divorce. But still Jeremiah held out hope; there was time for repentance. But it would have to be a genuine reformation, not just cosmetic, "a circumcision of the heart." But this did not happen, and in time the foreign power did come in the form of Babylon. Jerusalem was destroyed and the people were taken into captivity.

In the meantime, however, there was a reformation of sorts under king Josiah. He undertook to remove every sign of Assyrian dominance from the land of Judah. The Bible says of him: "He did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn to the right hand or to the left" (2 Kgs. 22:2). David, always depicted as the ideal king, was of course his distant father. Josiah was the son of Amon and the grandson of Manasseh, both of whom "did evil in the sight of the Lord." Josiah set his heart to undo all the evil perpetrated by his father and grandfather. If David was a man after God's own heart, Josiah is described by Yahweh as tender hearted and humble (2 Kgs. 22:19).

Josiah's reformation had been underway about six years when they found the Bible in the temple. Perhaps there is a lesson here. It isn't always the Bible that leads to reformation; it may be that reformation will lead us to the Bible. That is, we really "discover" the holy Scriptures, their meaning and relevance for us, in times of renewal.

The discovery of the Bible in the temple is told as if it were by accident, but we can believe it was by God's providence. Josiah's reform included repairs on the temple, probably to remove the last vestige of alien influence. Amidst the repairs "the Book of the Law" was discovered, probably a scroll-like manuscript of the book of Deuteronomy or a part thereof that had been laid back by some priest during the long years of Judah's indifference. When the king's secretary came to the temple one day to pay the workers, Hilkiah the priest told him "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord" (2 Kgs 22:8).

When it was read to Josiah he rent his garments, a gesture of despair, for it caused the king to realize how far the nation had wandered from God and he feared the warnings of God's wrath recorded in the document. Eager to have the document verified as the word of God and to know its relevance for his own time, Josiah sent a committee to inquire of a prophet, a woman! Huldah appears only here in the Bible, but we can be sure she spent her life as a prophet of God.

Huldah minced no words. It would be well for the church if the men of God would be as forthright as was this woman of God. She told the delegation sent by the king what Yahweh said: "Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants—all the

words of the book which the king of Judah has read." But she assured the king that because of his humility before Yahweh he would be gathered to his fathers in peace and his eyes would not see the calamity that would befall Judah.

The discovery of the Book of Torah accelerated Josiah's reforms. The king did a remarkable thing in gathering all the elders of Judah and all the people of Jerusalem around the temple, and there he personally read to them the portion of Scripture that had been found. He then made a covenant with the Lord before the people, vowing to keep with all his heart and soul all the words that had been read. The people joined him in the covenant. The king then called for a giant bonfire. There before the temple they burned all the articles that were made for Baal, Asherah, and all the host of heaven that had been found in the temple.

The king went on to effect other reforms, such as removing idolatrous priests, burning images to Baal, and bringing an end to sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals. He also brought an end to human sacrifice and tore down the high places of heathen worship that had stood since the days of Solomon. Moreover, he executed those who practiced black magic, all mediums and wizards, along with those who consulted them.

Josiah did an amazing thing in reinstituting the Passover, for it had not been observed since the days of the judges. In this the reforming king was looking to the future more than to the past in that the Passover was to be significant in Israel's future. This is in fact much of what this story is about, for in renewing the Covenant and reinstating the Passover the king was drawing creatively from the nation's past and restoring its meaning for the future. Josiah was a futurist that tapped the rich resources of the past, a lesson for ourselves.

We today have lost the Bible at church in a different way in that it has become irrelevant. We have lost its relevancy. Outwardly the Bible is part of our church life to the point of boredom. We study the same old subjects over and over again. We have had more concern with what the Scriptures meant to them back then than what they mean to us now. We are tuned out and turned off. The Bible has little meaning for our drug-addicted, crime-ridden, riot-torn world.

Part of the answer to this may lie in Josiah's reform. He rediscovered the Bible when he began to clear away the garbage. If we will slim down, live more simply, think with more discipline, pray more urgently, become more debt-free, be more concerned for the suffering masses, indulge in rigid self-examination—in this kind of renewal we might, like sweet-spirited Josiah, rediscover the Bible for our lives. We will fall in love with the Bible when we fall in love with our troubled world. When we come to terms with our own narcissism we will begin to see the beauty of the holy Scriptures. When we identify with

those who live out on the margins of society we will have more than a marginal concern for the Bible.

The psalmist's prayer can become ours: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things from your word." That is our task, to have a new vision of the world, of ourselves, and of God. Such renewal must come first, then we will rediscover the "lost" Bible in the temples of our own complex lives.—*the Editor*

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ON FITTING OTHERS TO OUR SIZE

Procrustes was a nickname, meaning Stretcher, given to Polypemon, a robber in Greek legend. As a highwayman he would tie wayfarers to his iron bed. He had a compulsion to make everyone fit his bed. If they were too short he stretched their limbs; if they were too long he cut them down to his size. Procrustes lives on as a model for those who would distend or diminish people so that they will conform to their own image. As the Stretcher, he was the "cookie cutter" of the ancient world, expanding and contracting people so they would all be alike, just like him.

Modem society as well as ancient Greece has its Procrustes'. Forced conformity is endemic to modem institutions. Whether a soldier in the army, a professor in a college, a preacher in the pulpit, or a politician in an elective office, it is almost impossible to be different, to be one's own person. There is always a Procrustes around. He may not force his way by the sword as did the ancient Grecian robber, but he has other ways of conforming people to his iron bed, sometimes money, sometimes social pressure. It is the nature of this world, which might be called "the System," to try to squeeze us into its mold.

There is probably something of Procrustes in all of us. We don't want people to be different from ourselves, and we tend to avoid people who are. We have our values that we want others to conform to, even when we have not critically examined those values. We are not all that different from chickens in a barnyard who will peck the "ugly duckling" to death. We don't want others to become either too smart or too dumb, but "just right" like ourselves. Mediocrity is often one of our iron beds. It is the Procrustes in us that causes us to resent excellence, and so we cut people down to our size.

The Procrustean attitude is a disease of the heart, a form of evil. If evil can be defined as forcing others to conform to our mold as an escape from our own failures and insecurities, or our narcissism (inordinate self love), then the Procrustes in us is evil. We

become what Dr. M. Scott Peck calls “people of the lie.” These are people who will destroy others, in spirit if not in body, in order to avoid self-scrutiny. In his book by that title Dr. Peck shows how parents sometimes kill the spirit of their own children in an effort to force conformity.

People of the lie, Dr. Peck says, are those who think only of themselves and never consider the feelings of others, even when they are their own children. Peck notes that people of the lie never sit down and talk with their children about their feelings, their desires, their hurts, their fears. This is because they are too concerned with protecting their own feelings, he says. Self-deception is the essence of narcissism and Procrusteanism.

Procrustes also lives on in the churches of today. He has moved his operation from the highways of ancient Greece to the corridors of ecclesiastical institutions.

Every sect and faction in Christendom has its own iron bed to which it would force all others to conform. Each one is indulging in self-deception, arrogating to itself some such claim as “the only true church,” and it forces those within its power to “size up” or “size down” to its own bed. The lie that it goes on telling is that we have to be alike, cookies made from the same cutter. This is what ailed Procrustes, who was deceived into supposing that everyone had to be just his size. Like the ancient robber, we are slow to see that there are beds beside our own.

The lie that assails us cannot be overcome until we accept the fact that we can no more see everything alike than we can look alike. Even those who demand conformity disagree among themselves. We overcome the lie by accepting the liberating principle of unity in diversity, which is the only kind of unity there is. It is the unity of the Bible. We must learn to settle the less crucial issues (the non-essentials) the way the earliest Christians settled them, by disagreeing agreeably. When the apostle Paul urged upon the young churches, “Forbearing one another in love,” he was implying that there would be divergent views, otherwise there would be no need to forbear.

Loving forbearance and forced conformity are mutually exclusive. When the Holy Spirit bears the fruit of longsuffering in us as Gal. 5:22 promises that he will, we will not care to expand and constrict people to our way of thinking. We show evidence of being filled with the Spirit when we allow others to be themselves in the Lord, different from ourselves. We can all be Christlike, but each in his or her own way. The principle of “gifts differing” must not be overlooked.

Another Greek legend was Theseus, Athens' greatest hero, who was born and reared in secret. When he was grown he was sent forth to combat evil, like Hercules before him, who was his hero. Among those he destroyed was Procrustes. By overcoming such evil Theseus saved Athens and laid the foundation for her greatness.

We have our blessings to count, for there are many in the church these days who stand up to the Procrustes' of our day and refuse to be measured on their sectarian beds. They are our heroes. They will save us and lay the foundation for our greatness.—*the Editor*

I have never been hurt by anything I didn't say.—*Calvin Coolidge*

It is characteristic of those who are evil to judge others as evil. Unable to acknowledge their own imperfection, they must explain away their flaws by blaming others.—*M. Scott Peck*

The rule in carving holds good as to criticism; never cut with a knife what you can cut with a spoon.—*Charles Buxton*

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Where Is the Good News in the Gospel We Preach. . .

WHAT MUST THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DO TO BE SAVED? (15)

There is a story about the disenchanted member of the Church of Christ who confronted every preacher who came to his congregation for the annual "Gospel Meeting" with the question, "What is good about the good news?" They would all say that the gospel means good news, but he wasn't hearing anything good in the gospel that they preached. It was rather bad news, or so it seemed to him. When he failed year after year to

get a satisfactory answer to his question, he concluded that he was not going to hear good news at the Church of Christ and left us.

The story may be apocryphal or it may be overstated, but for those of us who know the Churches of Christ there is a disturbing familiarity to it. It is a question we must come to terms with, *Where is the good news in the gospel that we preach?*

It would be deemed both presumptuous and irresponsible to say that after all these years the Churches of Christ do not even know what the gospel is, and that they preach more bad news than good news. We do of course preach what we understand to be the gospel, but the question the man asked in the story prevails—Where is the good news in the gospel that we preach?

A look at some of the fallacies we commit in reference to the gospel will serve to put the question in perspective. We have been critical of big-time evangelists like Billy Graham for "not preaching the gospel" since he does not preach baptism. We fail to apply this same rule to the apostle Paul who insisted that "Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel." If this means anything it means that there is a distinction between preaching the gospel and preaching baptism. Did any New Testament evangelist ever "preach" baptism? They preached "the gospel of the grace of God" and they preached" Jesus Christ and him crucified," but did they ever proclaim any ordinance? Was it not always a person, the Person of Jesus Christ, that they proclaimed?

Would it not follow then that anyone who proclaims Jesus as the risen Christ and the Savior of the world is preaching the good news of the gospel, *all* of the gospel? Granted, the likes of Billy Graham may err in not properly instructing people how to respond to the good news by repenting of their sins and being baptized for the remission of their sins like Peter did on the day of Pentecost. But if one preaches Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world he is preaching the gospel, apart from what he might or might not say about baptism.

Did not Peter preach the gospel, all of the gospel, before he had reason to say anything about baptism? Acts 2:37 says, "When they heard this, they were cut to the heart. ." What was the *this?* Was it not the facts that make up the good news, such as "This Jesus God raised up, of which we are all witnesses?" It was the gospel that cut them to the heart. The record says they asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" It is only at this point that Peter says anything about baptism. Suppose the response had been negative and they had turned away without making any inquiry about what they should do? In that case Peter would have said nothing about baptism, for it was an act of response to the gospel, not the gospel itself.

Peter told what was good about the good news before he was asked about baptism. That is in fact why they were cut to the heart, the power of the good news. Preaching baptism doesn't cut people to the heart, though it might convert them to an ordinance. And sometimes even the good news does not convict people. In other places in Acts, as in chap. 4, the apostles preach the gospel, but there is no response like that on Pentecost, and so nothing is said about baptism. But they no less preached the gospel.

Would it have been any different if in the history of Church of Christ preaching we had concentrated on proclaiming Jesus Christ as the good news of our salvation and said nothing about baptism except as people made inquiry as they did on Pentecost? Haven't we been guilty of preaching an ordinance more than a Person? It is understandable that a hungry soul such as the one in our story would badger our preachers about where the good news was in the gospel they preached.

Recent studies by some of our own scholars reveal that there has not been much good news in what we have called "gospel preaching." In a 1988 article in the *Gospel Advocate* F. W. Mattox explains that Church of Christ preachers have left it to "denominational preachers" to preach grace, faith, and the atonement while they "went about straightening out their misunderstanding of the place, action, and order of faith, repentance, and baptism in obtaining church membership." Mattox notes that while others preached the atonement of Christ but not baptism, we preached baptism but not the atonement of Christ. Others preached Christ while we "straightened out" those who so preached. Alas for the iron bed of Procrustes!

Back in 1937 K. C. Moser wrote a tract on "Are We Preaching The Gospel?" in which he charged that the Churches of Christ were not preaching the gospel. By the gospel he meant the good news of Jesus Christ and him crucified. For much of his life Moser charged that we are not a Cross-centered, grace-oriented people, and even when we "preach" baptism it is treated as an arbitrary command unrelated to the Cross. In a reference to one of Harry Emerson Fosdick's books, in which he finds not even a hint of Christ dying for our sins, Moser issued a stunning indictment of Church of Christ preaching: "If Mr. Fosdick has REJECTED the gospel, others have NEGLECTED it." Moser examined a book of 50 Church of Christ sermons and found in none of them more than a passing reference to the gospel.

Bill Love, minister to the Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston, in a new book titled *The Core Gospel* has studied the content of preaching in the Restoration Movement during its first four generations, from the early 1800's to the 1950's. His aim was to determine to what extent Restoration preachers preached the core gospel (the Cross) in comparison to New Testament preachers. His findings are disturbing, for while the NT

preachers referred to the Cross in all the 33 sermons in the NT (100% of the time), Restoration preachers in the hundreds of sermons that Bill studied referred to the Cross only 25% of the time.

Love's study reveals that there was a continual decline in the preaching of the Cross from the generation of Stone and Campbell (56% of their sermons pointed to the Cross) to the generation of G. C. Brewer and Foy Wallace (23% of the time). In the first two generations, before the Church of Christ was a separate church, preachers referred to the cross an average of 52% of the time, while in the two generations of Church of Christ history our preachers averaged only 25%.

I could not help but notice that the most irenic and unity-minded of our preachers were Cross-centered (Barton Stone, who never had a debate, pointed to the Cross 82 % of the time), while the more controversial did not (J. D. Tant referred to the Cross only 12% of the time). I was pleased to see that Hardeman and Wallace scored as high in Bill's study as they did, 41% and 42% respectively. But the over-all findings are alarming. Part of Bill' s conclusion is: "Our focus moved from Christ crucified to his church, a subtle but destructive shift," and then adds "Once our sickness took hold, we grew weaker and weaker, more and more anemic. . Without the gospel we lost touch with the source of our faith."

The Church of Christ is sick and without the gospel? If this charge is anything like a true appraisal, it is clear enough what we must do to be saved. We must discover the good in the good news. What is good about the good news is that God's mercy is as magnanimous and as far reaching as the universe itself. God's love has no limits and his grace is unconditional. We must discover, as an astronomer sights a "new" constellation in the heavens, the magnificent grace and mercy passages in Scripture and saturate our preaching with them.

Here are a few of the great truths about the good news that the Churches of Christ have virtually ignored. If we would begin to emphasize these passages in our teaching and preaching as we have passages about baptism and the church, it is predictable that a great change would be wrought among us.

"For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him." (Jn. 3:17)

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." (Jn. 12:32)

"For I did not come to judge the world but to save the world." (Jn. 12:47)

"So that by the grace of God he might taste of death for every one." (Heb. 2:9)

"For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men." (Tit. 2:11)

"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:22)

"And he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 Jn. 2:2)

"For the love of God controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." (2 Cor. . 5:14-15)

"In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Cor. 5:19)

These passages all have something precious in common: each one tells us that Christ died for the sins of the entire world, all humankind, every single person, absolutely and unconditionally. However sinful your life has been, Christ died for you. You are saved by his grace, which is God's free gift. Now that is good news! We are not preaching good news when we tell people they are lost and bound for doom and destruction. They are saved and bound for heaven! That is what is good about the good news.

So, there are two "gospels" we can preach. We can tell the world it is lost and must repent to be saved. Or we can tell the world what the Bible says in the passages quoted, that just as in Adam all died so in Christ are all made alive, that all people are saved, so one only needs to accept the free gift. We can look at the world and say every one is lost except those that the Bible says will be saved, or we can look at the world and say every one is saved except those that the Bible says will be lost. Which is good news: You are lost, therefore repent; or You are saved, won't you accept it?

Jesus is the Savior of the world, not the *potential* Savior. He has not died for all men *if*. . . He has died for all men (period!) Christ died for you; you are saved by his grace, no strings attached. Only accept it. That is the good news of the gospel. Everyone is saved! The only exceptions are those the Bible clearly states will be lost—those who persistently and finally refuse to accept the free gift. The Bible condemns only those who refuse and continue to refuse to believe and obey Christ.

So, the Church of Christ has had it backwards and has consequently preached bad news. We have preached that everyone is lost, while the Bible teaches that everyone is saved. Everyone is saved except those who refuse the free gift. The Bible tells us who will be lost, those who "refuse to acknowledge God" (Rom. 1:28) even after he unconditionally bestowed his grace upon them. Everyone else is saved.

That's the answer to the disheartened member of the Church of Christ who wanted to know what is good about the good news. What an answer we have for such ones. What is good about the good news is that Jesus Christ has saved the whole world, every single soul, by dying on lhe Cross for us, freely and unconditionally. Wow, that is good news!

Let's preach the glorious good news. God has saved you through Christ, taking away all your sins, as the above verses teach. Won't you accept it through faith and baptism? Only those who refuse will be lost. Or to put it another way, everyone is of "the elect" (another subject we virtually ignore) except those who persistently refuse to believe and obey.—*the Editor*

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Restoration or Reformation?. . .

WHAT KIND OF MOVEMENT WAS IT?

Those who read the writings of all three of the churches emanating from the Stone-Campbell heritage, as I do, will notice that we are using the term "Restoration Movement" less and the Stone-Campbell Movement more. I don't know how much the wide-circulation of my history book that bore that title has to do with it, maybe none, but I am pleased that we are using "Restoration" less. I have argued both in this journal and in my history text that our pioneers were reformers more than restorers, and what they launched was a unity movement more than a restoration movement.

There has been considerable controversy over the thesis I set forth in my history book that restorationism is by its nature divisive, and is largely responsible for our proclivity to divide, over and over again.

In his essay I am making further observations on the subject that may serve to answer my critics and at the same time put the restoration/reformation motifs in clearer perspective.

I will seek first to give a clearer definition of restorationism, sometimes called primitivism, and practiced by such sects as Plymouth Brethren and the Mormons as well as some of our own people. It usually has these beliefs: (1) the true church apostatized and ceased to exist; (2) the many denominations that emerged are false churches and in no way represent the true church; (3) the New Testament provides an exact pattern, a kind of blue print, for the makeup of the church; (4) the true church has been restored in its pristine

purity, and we are that church "in name, organization, worship, and practice" or some such attending claim.

I was taught this in a Church of Christ-related college by way of an illustration. Should the game of baseball become extinct for centuries, some future generation could "restore" the game by following the plan outlined in the old book, "The Game of Baseball," turned up by the spade of an archaeologist. The rules of the game, the shape of the field, the position of the players are all prescribed, so the game would be reproduced precisely as it was played centuries earlier. So it is with the church, I was taught. Even though the true New Testament church ceased to exist, it too can be "restored" by following "the rule book," the New Testament, that clearly identified the true Church of Christ in detail.

It was something of a shock when I was forced to recognize that the New Testament is not the kind of book that my teachers had led me to believe. There is far too much diversity in the New Testament to make it into a rule book or an exact pattern. If it were all as simple as a baseball manual, with all the details spelled out, there would no disagreements such as we have in the church today. Since the New Testament is not all that simple and lends itself to varying interpretations, it is understandable that we do not see everything alike.

But restorationism demands conformity, with each restorationist arrogating to himself the role of an infallible interpreter. Restorationism thus has a hermeneutics all its own, making the New Testament a collection of documents they were never intended to be. It claims what the New Testament never claims for itself: that we are to do today precisely as the primitive church did. It might be better argued that we are to do for our time what the earliest Christians did for theirs, drawing upon living principles found in the New Testament that are more descriptive than prescriptive.

It is necessary to make some changes as the church progresses through the centuries. Common sense and experience alike show us that there is no way to be a first century church in the twentieth century. And yet the basics of the Christian faith never change, transcending all time and all cultures. But methods and secondary doctrine will change in order to meet the challenge of our kind of world. But restorationism allows for no such diversity. Each restorationist party has its own list of "issues" that cannot change, and these are the reason for its existence as a separate "loyal church."

Restorationist hermeneutics thus assumes what cannot be proven: that the pattern for "the true church" is spelled out with such clarity that there is little place for diversity, so that a plea for unity when coupled with restoration is hardly more than a demand for conformity. In that it promotes the "loyal church" fallacy restorationism fosters more and

more divisions, with each faction convinced that it is the only true church and the only faithful Christians. This is because each faction has a different interpretation on what the New Testament pattern describes.

The reformation tradition, however, holds that the church has always been in need of reform, including the New Testament churches. The church upon earth never has and never will be perfect, so renewal is an ongoing process. But that imperfect church as the Body of Christ has always existed. Just as a sick person is still a person, so the church, however ill it may become, is still the Church of Christ upon earth. The gates of hades will never prevail against it, just as Jesus promised. Reformers are hesitant to judge a "corrupt" church as no longer Christ's church, just as Paul spoke of the Corinthians as the Body of Christ in spite of their imperfections. The reformer thus calls for repentance and renewal, not for a "restored church" to displace the erring one.

While restorationism has been the dominant motif in the recent history of the Churches of Christ/Christians Churches. it was the reformation motif that dominated our earlier history. The Stone-Campbell Movement, as our heritage may properly be described, was an effort to unite Christians by an appeal to certain renewal and reformatory principles and ideals. It was therefore a unity movement rather than a "Restoration Movement," a term of more recent vintage, for it was not called this in its early history.

These conclusions are supported by these considerations:

1. There are at least five founding documents of the Stone-Campbell Movement, all of which are unity documents in that they call for the unity of all Christians in one way or another. Only one of the documents, the *Declaration and Address* by Thomas Campbell, makes any reference to restoration. But Campbell was not a restorationist as above defined or he could have never written in that document what is now the most famous quotation in our history, "The Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one." He wrote that in 1809 before he launched his movement and before he had his first congregation. So he had no illusion about "restoring the true church" that no longer existed. "The Church of Christ upon earth" was his testimonial that the church then existed and always had since Pentecost. In that same document Campbell refers to the "variety of opinion and practice, without any breach of Christian unity" of the apostolic churches, concluding that the same unity in diversity can obtain today.

2. Barton W . Stone, the founder of the movement, if only one person is named, referred to his "ardent desire for the restoration and glory of the ancient religion of Christ-the religion of love, peace, and union on earth," *(Chris. Mess.,* 1826, p. 2), a conception of restoration that is universally accepted. I have found no instances in which Stone uses the term in reference to restoring the church itself, as if it did not exist. He rather referred to

his and Campbell's efforts as "this reformation." He was clearly a reformer, as he was at last described on his tombstone at Cane Ridge. He believed in the inviolability of the church, and he saw himself as continuing in the great tradition of Martin Luther. Unity was his constant theme, his motto being, "Let Christian unity be our polar star." One would suppose, judging by some interpreters of the movement, that Stone had said, "Let restorationism be our polar star."

3. Alexander Campbell, the most illustrious figure of the Movement, identified part of his mission as "the restoration of the ancient order," by which he particularly referred to restoring the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper to the modem church. Since he recognized that the church has always existed, even though imperfect, he sought to restore the ancient order *to* the church, not the church itself. Like his father and like Stone, he believed in the indestructibility of the church. This is why he believed there were Christians in other churches, which he referred to as "other denominations," indicating his reluctance to see his own people as "the only true church" and all others as false. Campbell sometimes used restoration and reformation as synonyms, but he referred to his mission as "the New Reformation" and often wrote on "Principles of Reform." When his young colleagues, Robert Richardson and C. L. Loos, wrote their accounts of the Movement they described it as "The Reformation of the Nineteenth Century."

4. Walter Scott, another of the founding fathers, might appear on the surface to be a restorationist in the primitivism sense, for he often referred to "the Restoration" and to "the Restoration of the Ancient Gospel." But he was referring to his own "five finger exercise" in which he preached baptism for the remission of sins and baptized one William Amend in 1827, the first in history since apostolic times to be so baptized, Scott supposed. Even Alexander Campbell supported this view for a time, referring to the gospel being restored in 1827, though he later backed away from such a daring claim. And even Scott in *The Evangelist* (1833, p. 16) modified the claim by explaining that it was "the practical exhibition and application of the Gospel" that was restored, not the gospel itself, which he granted had always been proclaimed by the church.

When Scott referred to the Movement in general he, like the others, called it the reformation, as in that same volume (p. 59) he refers to Alexander Campbell as "the leader in the present famous Reformation." And when he referred to his own important contribution of clarifying the place of baptism, he used restoration as the Campbells did: "The church of God on that day, had restored to it publicly and practically and a manner of handling it" *(Christian Evangelist.* 1833, p. 162). Again one will notice the crucial distinction between restoring to the church that is already a reality something that is lacking and the notion of restoring the church itself as if it did not exist.

5. Even more impressive is that the great rank and file, including the workers out among the churches, consistently referred to the Movement as “this Reformation” or “the current Reformation” in their reports to the various journals. I have noted scores and scores of these. One would be hard put to find a single report that refers to “the Restoration Movement” which is so common among us today. This term, which was not used by our pioneers, must have come out of the emphasis given to restorationism in the emergence non-instrument Churches of Christ and the Bible college movement of independent Christian Churches.

Being realistic, I have to concede that we are probably stuck with the term “Restoration Movement.” So, we should upgrade the definition of “Restoration” to mean renewal, reform, etc., as some are now doing and as I do in the name of this journal. We must, however, also concede that in the larger Christian world such a term as “Restoration Movement” will have little meaning. Campbell could meaningfully call for a “New Reformation” in his day, but with “Restoration Movement” we are talking only to ourselves. Whatever terms we use in referring to our heritage we must look for fresh ways to appeal to the values we believe to be inherent in Christian origins.

The upshot of all this is that restorationism as a mindset must go, not only because of its abuse of the New Testament with its faulty hermeneutics, but also because it is inherently divisive, spawning as it does sects and sub-sects, not only among us but in the church at large. It is imperative that we recapture the true intent of our heritage as a unity movement. Restorationism and unity are antipodal. We can’t be restorationists and unitists, but we can be reformers and unitists, which is what our heritage is all about.—*the Editor*

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CHILDREN AT THE LORD’S TABLE?

Richard E. Smith

The Lord’s Supper, as we know it, came into being during the Passover meal which Jesus shared with his disciples. This was an unusual Passover with twelve men gathered with the Lord around a table. It was not typical at all. This was normally a family affair (Ex. 12:3). The mother and father and children ate it together. Even today the Seder ritual begins with a young child asking, “Why is this night different from all other nights?” Then the father answers and more questions are asked. In Jewish homes the children help prepare by searching the house for pieces of leavened bread which the father has hidden. It is a joyful, festive event and very much a family affair. The children delight in being a part of it.

Even though the children of the fleeing Hebrews could not fully comprehend the full significance of the lamb's blood on the doorpost, and the great thing God had wrought, they were not excluded. Far from it. Their very participation in this memorial over the years taught them to revere and treasure that great act of deliverance. What they experienced as children they probably first really under-stood as adults.

Our Lord's Supper came out of this lovely family feast of the Jews. Is it not curious that under the lesser covenant the young children were intimately and joyously involved, and under the superior covenant (Heb. 8:6) they are totally excluded? Instead, they must sit there as outsiders and non-participants until the age of 12 or 14 when they are baptized. I doubt that this exclusion is in God's will at all.

Is it consistent to teach a four-year old to sing "Jesus Loves Me" and urge him to believe in the Lord but exclude him from this great family feast which celebrates *our* deliverance? These are the same ones of whom Jesus said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven. Don't keep them from coming to me." These are the same children that Paul tells us are sanctified and holy because of their parents' faith (1 Cor. 7:14).

These small children may not comprehend the full meaning of the bread and the cup (most of us don't) but they know it has to do with God's love. They have been taught to believe in Jesus. They should be able to celebrate along with the rest of the family. Their exclusion is merely a misguided tradition.

Growing up in another Christian tradition, I have vivid memories of sitting next to my mother and father as a five-year old, reverently sharing with them in the Lord's Supper. It was a joyful experience for me. I'm glad I was blessed with that opportunity. I hope we can see fit to include in the Lord's Supper those who were seen by Jesus as typical of the kingdom of heaven.—*1420 Drury Dr., Dallas, Tx. 75232*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

Ouida thought she was in for a boring time when she saw all the old folk that had gathered for the golden anniversary of my graduating class at Abilene Christian University, but she found out that they weren't so old after all. The first old classmate we met was a dear sister who has been reading this journal for years and rejoices over every issue, and we didn't know it. That got us off to a good start. We had a great time reminiscing; no one

seemed to remember what a rebel I was back in those days. We all had fun telling each other that we had not changed a bit! Walter Adams, now 94, who was dean of the college back in those days and a long time afterward (He handed out 10,000 degrees as dean!) met with us and handed out diplomas to us as he had done 50 years before, this time inducting us into the ACU Golden Anniversary Club. The all-male quartet that sang together back in 1942 sang together once more. It was all a touching experience. Ouida is glad she went along.

We also had a good time together in Austin where I spoke at the Westlake Church of Christ on our heritage, and stayed in the home of old friends Dot and Max Watson. Max, a roommate of mine at ACU, is an elder at Westlake and Dot works for the state. We were impressed with Westlake's rented facility, adequate in every way and they don't have to worry about owning property, and they can move when they please. Not a bad way to do it. We also visited the Institute for Christian Studies and had a delightful time with the faculty at lunch, a faculty that is so qualified that it appears over-qualified for an undergraduate institution, though it will soon offer a graduate program. It may well be the most favorable place to get an academic biblical education among Churches of Christ. Being a ministry of the University Church of Christ it also has the advantage of being closer to the churches. Ann Grey, a secretary at ICS, was our gracious hostess for the trip. Ouida and I see her as nothing less than angelic.

Church of Christ leaders appear to be joining other denominational leaders in recognizing that the church in general is "Dying for Change," as the title of one concerned book puts it. Flavil Yeakley, Jr., director of the Center for Church Growth at Harding U., recently addressed a seminar at Harding on the subject of change. He said the barriers to change are more psychological and sociological than they are theological. He indicated that our elders in general are negative to change in their desire to preserve stability, while ministers are generally open to change. He sees this as a possible cause of much of the tension between elders and ministers. He advised that change must be implemented in a way that promotes unity. He thinks the way to do this is to maintain stability in essentials of the faith while effecting change in matters of method.

I am presently reading with great interest William Martin's *A Prophet With Honor*, which is an authorized biography of Billy Graham. I am pleased that the most definitive study of this century's greatest evangelist should be done by an old, respected friend, a graduate of both ACU and Harvard and a professor at Rice. It is more than a portrayal of Graham. It is rich in Americana and is in part a study of Fundamentalism/Evangelicalism. Graham appears to hold on loosely to both an yet be ecumenical, and he thinks of himself, probably rightly, as a world evangelist more than an American evangelist, actually a world evangelist-statesman. Mar-tin is impressed that after 40 years as a televangelist Graham

remains scandal-free, both financially and sexually, a prophet with honor. This is because Graham exercises fastidious caution to avoid any appearance of evil. Martin also sees him as a pious man with uncommon sincerity. He tells how Graham reads both Psalms and Proverbs as part of his daily devotions, the Psalms to relate better to God, the Proverbs to relate better to man. But William Martin's wit and humor also shines through. He tells how Graham hates being late for an appointment (Who doesn't?) but says he doesn't mind waiting on others. Martin ad libs that visitors should not take that statement seriously! And I delight in such Martinisms as "sobersided midwest Evangelicals"!

Some members of the Richardson East Church of Christ in Dallas, including minister Larry James, went across town to meet with the Gladewater Missionary Baptist Church, a black congregation, on a recent Sunday morning to pray for unity between their people and for peace in our troubled country. Even though the meeting, part of a project sponsored by the Greater Dallas Community of Churches, was planned before the Los Angeles riot that tragedy was felt at the gathering. The black church is located in a seamy part of south Dallas near a crack house and a bootlegging operation. The black minister spoke of the appropriateness of such a gathering "seeing that the forces of evil are taking their toll." The white minister referred to the King verdict and said it had taught him "how tenuous life is in America, how fragile justice is, and how much we need each other." The white Church of Christ in north Dallas has 1,000 members, the black church in south Dallas only 30. A Dallas newspaper carried the story in a four-column spread along with a picture of the combined congregations in prayer. Here is an instance of "our going to them," which is the way to do it. Don't you suppose this is better than gathering for a big debate?

Roman Catholic authorities are fearful that "two churches" may emerge in Europe, dividing Catholicism, one progressive and the other traditional. The seed of the possible rupture is that the "tough" bishops of the ex-Communist nations, some of whom have only recently emerged from "underground," distrust the western church and consider it decadent. While the secular press gave it little attention, the pope recently convened a synod of Europe's bishops to deal with the problem.

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READER'S EXCHANGE

We do not like to think about the end of this year when your publication will come to an end. At times we get depressed by all the legalism and resulting division we see in the religious world, but your articles bring us back to higher ground and give us the faith and hope we need to press on and try to make a few changes where we can.—*Ward and Sarah Case, Jamestown, Tn.*

All through the years the two of you have been the source of great strength to me, partly because of your care of Mother Pitts. Your care of her has been a most valuable example to all of us. Your paper is such spiritual reinforcement. When you stop publication I shall begin to re-read all the past issues. I see no reaching out on the part of the Church of Christ, no moving from legalism toward freedom, joy, grace, love. But when I read your paper I am encouraged.—*Kathy Wyler, Kerrville, Tx.*

Just wanted you to know we care and we share! I was behind in reading your journal, so the news didn't reach me until a month later. I'm caught up now. We feel Mother Pitts is our friend and our hearts go out to you.—*Gene and Ruby Barbee, Yukon, Ok.*

I am made rich by the articles and the emphasis on God's grace. The articles on what the Church of Christ must do to be saved are priceless and thought-provoking. Thank you for your tireless effort to arouse thinking and action among our divided people.—*Helen Berg, Port Arthur, Tx.*

When you stop publishing, editors like me who have felt a close kinship through the years with your goals and principles, hope that many of your readers will at least try us out. We would be delighted to send sample copies to anyone who asks. But we prefer that you stay in business.—*Alex Wilson, Work and Work, 2518 Portland Ave., Lexington, Ky. 40206*

(Yes, I highly recommend this journal that has been well-edited for many years, going back to R. H. Boll himself. While it circulates mainly among our premillennial congregations, its editorial policy is open, its spirit is Christlike, and among its goals is unity of all God's people. I would urge you to accept the editor's offer and write for a sample copy.—*Ed.*)

The Restoration Heritage Meeting V, held in Dover, Delaware in April, was the best yet. Fourteen congregations were represented: eight acappella, five Independent Christian, one Disciples of Christ. Fifty-one present. The spirit was excellent and the talks well received.—*Herb Pratt, New Castle, De.*

I will miss receiving the paper so much. It has been such a blessing. God bless and keep you and Ouida. Enjoy each day and issue a newsletter occasionally so we can keep in touch. Thanks!—*Frances Damron, Auburn, AI.*

(Several of our readers have suggested we do a newsletter once this paper closes down in December. While Ouida persuasively contends that if we *quit* we ought to quit, we are considering issuing some kind of newsletter, at least for a time. We'll see. The Lord will lead.—*Ed.*)

Thank you for your faith and work of love. It is of great encouragement to me and to so many others.—*Bob D. Lewis, DeFuniak Springs, FL.*

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BOOK NOTES

The new book edited by Cecil Hook and titled *Our Heritage in Unity and Fellowship,* is a collection of some of the writings of Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett, taken from several sources and going back for many years. It treats three subjects: our history, unity, fellowship. Many of the articles are now out of print and not available anywhere else. Ketcherside's articles on "The Sand Creek Declaration", 'The Authority Totem", and "A Boy Learns the Meaning of Brotherhood," all previously out-of-print and eminently delightful and informative, are alone worth the price of the book, which is $9.95 postpaid. There are 51 such articles by the two of us. The editor writes an interesting introduction. Only 2,000 copies printed and 300 are already gone.

While we have only a few left of some of them, we still have available seven bound volumes of this journal, adding up to 12 years, 2400 pages, for only $70 postpaid. Loose copies are 14 for $5 postpaid, selected at random by us. If you specify the issues, 50 cents each plus postage.

Until my own book on our history is republished, I am recommending *Captives of the Word,* subtitled "A Narrative History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Christian Churches (Independent) and the Churches of Christ." It is a delightfully-told story, rich in detail, by Louis and Bess Cochran. $13 .50 postpaid.

Endangered Heritage by Walt Yancey is subtitled "An Examination of Church of Christ Doctrine." On such doctrines as instrumental music, exclusivism, and "the Church of Christ is not a denomination," Yancey shows by extensive quotes from our pioneers that we have been misinformed on what our heritage is all about. A fearless book by a member of the Church of Christ. $9.95 postpaid.

Stephen Sandifer's *Deacons: Male and Female?* is subtitled "A Study for Churches of Christ," and takes the position that it is biblically and historically sound for the church to have women deacons. Persuasively and resourcefully argued by a Church of Christ scholar. $12.50 postpaid.

Subscription Rates: $6.00 one year (you will receive aU the issues still available for 1992) or renewal $3.00 for the duration (Dec. 1992). In clubs of three or more (mailed by us) $2.60 per name for the duration or $4.00 per name for all available issues for 1992. Foreign: $4.00 for the duration.

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RESTORATION REVIEW
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Denton, TX 76201*
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